

to resist it." There was no thought of isolating or encircling Germany and Italy. Here was the pure milk of the doctrine of the Balance of Power. On August 15 the Foreign Secretary advised the Polish Government to make it plain that, provided essentials could be secured, they were at all times ready to examine the possibility of negotiations over Danzig if there was a prospect of success. But we made no attempt to persuade Poland to surrender the city.

A Russo-German pact, explained the Prime Minister in a letter to Hitler dated August 22, could not alter our obligation to Poland. "It has been alleged that if H.M.G. had made their position more clear in 1914 the great catastrophe would have been avoided. Whether or not there is any force in that allegation, H.M.G. are resolved that on this occasion there shall be no tragic misunderstanding. If the case should arise they are resolved and prepared to employ without delay all the forces at their command." Hitler replied that this statement could not affect his determination to safeguard the interests of the Reich. This was his way of saying that Dictators cannot climb down. Further exchanges during the following days were equally fruitless, and in the early hours of September 1 Germany invaded Poland. Two days later our treaty pledge was implemented by a declaration of war. "No man," declared the Prime Minister, "can say that the Government could have done more to try to keep open the way for an honourable and equitable settlement of the dispute between Germany and Poland. Nor have we neglected any means of making it clear to the German Government that, if they insisted on using force again in the manner in which they had used it in the past, we were resolved to oppose them by force." In September, 1938, there were deep divisions in

Parliament and the country : in September, 1939, there were none. There had been grave doubts in some quarters as to the wisdom of our promise to Poland in view of the extreme difficulty of rendering effective aid and in the absence of an understanding with Russia, but there could be no hesitation about keeping our word. In 1938 the question was often heard: Why should we fight for Czechoslovakia? In 1939 very few voices inquired why we should fight for Danzig. Trusting that we should continue to yield, Hitler had struck again and again till the brutal attack on Poland caused the cup to overflow. For Poland, like Belgium in 1914, was the symbol of a conflict in which not only the right of weak nations